

**Prepared Remarks of Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission**

6th Annual Common Sense Media Awards

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Washington, D.C.
February 25, 2010**

**On Receipt of the
Newt Minow Award for Leadership on Behalf of Children and Families**

Welcome to FCC Commissioners Mike Capps and Mignon Clyburn, to RUS Administrator Jonathan Adelstein, and the other former FCC Commissioners in attendance tonight -- Commissioners Debbie Tate and Gloria Tristani.

Welcome -- and thank you -- to the members of the wonderful FCC staff here with us, who are working hard around the clock for kids and families, especially as the due date of the National Broadband Plan nears.

Thank you to Common Sense Media for honoring me this evening. And thank you to my friend and force of nature, Jim Steyer, for the remarkable work that he and the whole team at Common Sense do to empower parents and educators, and enrich the lives of children.

And, no, I'm not just saying nice things about Common Sense Media because I was a board member...

I'm saying them because Common Sense Media is giving me an award.

I'd like to congratulate my fellow honorees and thank them for their contributions to our country and our culture:

- Howard Gardner for studying young minds,
- Nichole Pinkard for shaping young minds, and
- George Lucas for blowing young minds.

Thank you, Alfre Woodard, for hosting tonight's program with your usual grace and wit.

I also want to recognize my brilliant and beautiful wife, Rachel, and incredible son, Jake. Our other two kids, like April and John's, are at home, hopefully asleep.

Rachel's mom, Harriet, is here this evening from California. If I appear a bit nervous, it's not because I have to speak following these incredible honorees; it's because I have to speak in front of my mother-in-law.

Now -- to Newt Minow -- thank you for presenting me this award, and for setting a standard for excellence at the FCC that we are still trying to reach half-a-century later.

The youngest chairman in FCC history, appointed at age 34 by President Kennedy, Newt Minow is truly a national treasure.

In some ways, his tenure at the FCC gets shortchanged. Many people remember him for turning the single most memorable phrase in communications policy history -- his declaration that television was a "vast wasteland."

For decades, FCC Chairmen have been trying to one-up him.

All have failed.

Considering that Newt Minow once generated more column inches than any official in the Kennedy Administration except JFK, and the most media attention I've garnered was a couple of hours as the number one item on Google News before being bumped by a David Hasselhoff story, I know not to even try.

By the way, the David Hasselhoff thing is true.

And Newt thought the media was frivolous in 1961.

It's important to know that Newt Minow was more than just an effective communicator.

As FCC Chairman, he shifted and improved the television landscape by requiring UHF reception for all TVs and establishing quality public television on the media landscape.

He also paved the way for communications satellites. On that, he had conviction that was visionary, and also reflected what my mom would call Chutzpah.

True story: Newt Minow once told President Kennedy that putting communications satellites in space was more important than putting a man on the moon, because "satellites allow ideas to be sent into space, and ideas last longer than men."

That's how an FCC Chairman gets a boat named after him. The S.S. Minnow from Gilligan's Island. You can look it up.

Now of course, "FCC Chairman" is not the only important title Newt Minow has held.

He was Sergeant Minow in the U.S. Army during World War II.

He was Chairman of the Board of both PBS and the Rand Corporation.

He was President of the Carnegie Corporation, where he helped get the original funding for Sesame Street.

He was Chairman of the Commission on Presidential Debates, and is recognized as the father of those debates, first proposing the idea in 1955, and helping keep them alive to this day.

He has the mysterious title of Honorary Consul General of Singapore.

But if you asked Newt Minow to name the most important titles he has ever held, I think I know what he would say: Husband, and Dad.

And for tonight's presentation of the Newt Minow Award for Leadership on Behalf of Children and Families, we are fortunate to be joined by -- Newt Minow's children and family.

In the audience are Newt's wife, Jo, and their daughter Nell, who is both a prominent film critic and one of the nation's leading experts on corporate governance. Daughter Martha Minow is with us tonight, now Dean of Harvard Law School. Martha Minow is the favorite law school professor of every student who has ever taken a class with her, as I was lucky to do, as was a young, obviously properly inspired, student named Barack Obama.

Not here tonight -- because the Minows are so vital a national resource they're not allowed to all be in the same place at the same time -- is Newt and Jo's daughter Mary, one of the nation's leading library law experts.

Few people ever reach the professional heights and hold more powerful posts than Newt Minow. But looking at his remarkable daughters reminds us that there is no more important and consequential job than being a parent.

And tonight we are certainly reminded that media presents enormous challenges to parents. In the digital age, the opportunities are real, and so are the risks.

The potential of the Internet and new technology to transform lives for the better is almost limitless. But this explosion of new technologies can expose our kids to new risks, and potentially outpace the abilities of parents to guide their children through our challenging world.

Parents are left asking if they should be embracing these changes or worrying about them.

Newt Minow and his extraordinary career tell us the answer: We have to do both.

And that is what's so special about Common Sense Media.

It embraces, with the fervent leadership that Jim Steyer demonstrates, the imperative of harnessing technology to improve the lives of kids, empower families, advance digital citizenship, and honor the First Amendment.

At the FCC, these goals are at the core of our agenda -- as we pursue a world-class broadband infrastructure for America that promotes opportunity, innovation and prosperity, that is open and safe.

As long as I'm Chairman, the FCC will be committed to working with organizations like Common Sense Media to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities of the digital age.

Working together, we can build a brighter tomorrow for our children.

Some may call that wishful thinking. I call it ... common sense.

Thank you. May the Force be with you.